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Consciousness of God

TWO LECTURES

ON THE

ANTECEDENTS OF REVELATION

BY

T. A. LACEY, M.A.

Chaplain of the London Diocesan Penitentiary
Highgate

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S. T. C.

CONDISCIPVLVS

PREFACE

THESE two lectures were read, in the Michaelmas Term of last year, before the Confraternity of the Holy Trinity at Cambridge. If an excuse were required—which is certainly not the case—for starting from a remark made by Aubrey Moore, it might be found in the fact that his essay in *Lux Mundi* was included among the books recommended to members of the Confraternity for special reading during the term. The Lectures are printed, in the main, as they were delivered, but with enlargements and corrections. Both enlargements and corrections are chiefly due to searching criticisms offered by men who were present at the reading, and the development of the argument in the second lecture was regulated in no small degree by the comments made upon the first. To these critics I tender my hearty

thanks, and not least to those with whom I cannot agree.

It is by an afterthought, consequent on the discussion of the first lecture, that I have claimed to be treating the antecedents of revelation. "You seem," it was said, "to leave no room at all for intellectualism." The only room that I wish to leave for intellectualism is well in the rear of my thought: I wish to get as far away from it as possible; for I understand by it an attempt to reduce all human experience within the categories of the understanding, and to express all that lies beyond human experience by a tentative use of the same terms. It would be as reasonable to reduce all experience within the categories of smelling—as a dog, perhaps, may do. Small minds enamoured of the system suppose the work to be accomplished: they even take the tentative as final, and talk of apocalyptic vision as if the New Jerusalem came down from GOD out of heaven, solid in three dimensions. Greater minds, entangled in the system, know their own limitations. Aristotle,

to whom the working of the human intellect was as a charted sea, showed in the parable of the cave-dwellers* his belief that a conviction of divine things could be carried by tradition and emotion. Thomas Aquinas, who was a saint before and after he was an intellectualist, said in his weary last sickness that all he had written seemed to him as chaff. He had visions of things not reducible to his well-worn categories.

Vitai lampada tradunt. Aristotle and Thomas were two of the greatest runners in the torch-race of human thought. No man denies their greatness in saying that they ran well their appointed distances, passing on the sacred torch to others. What endangers their reputation is any attempt to represent them as stationary beacons. Thomas received the knowledge of human experienee which Aristotle had, or a part of it, adding thereto the experience of Christianity. This experience includes all that is known of the life of the LORD JESUS, all that

* It is extant only in Cicero's translation : *De Nat. Deorum*, ii. 37.

is known of the aspirations and achievements of the saints, all that is known of the sighing of sinners and their songs of deliverance ; for Thomas, in particular, it included memories of St. Francis, and the struggle, sometimes futile or misdirected, of the great popes of two centuries against feudalism and imperialism. The scholastic philosophy, the scholastic theology being a part of it, was a courageous endeavour to form a complete synthesis of this experience, in the categories of the human understanding. It was a movement of living thought, and continued so to be for no little time. Movement ceased, criticism died, formula became fixed, and the ultimate result was the lifeless system now known as scholasticism.

But criticism died only within, to make a new beginning without the system, and eventually to inspire Immanuel Kant. That criticism has produced some negative results, and points the way to some positive achievements. We may attain to a synthesis that will satisfy us no less than the scholastic synthesis satisfied

our fathers; but that is not yet. We must put up with provisional attempts. To go on now in the way of scholasticism is to imitate those who went on working in the Ptolemaic system after the observations of Kepler. In a sense, this was reasonable. Astronomy is a practical art as well as a science; the Ptolemaic system gave results that were practically correct, and navigation and the making of almanacks could not wait until a new system was elaborated; I believe that Tycho Brahe's Tables were used long after men became aware that they were founded on a false hypothesis. Theology, also, has a practical side, and it may be right still to use in practical teaching methods which can no longer be received as scientific. But there is danger if a worn-out hypothesis be taught as positive truth.

Meanwhile a new synthesis must be sought. It is by no means certain that it will be intellectually coherent. Something was said on this head in my lectures, to which I would here add a word of explanation. The human mind is in-

tolerant of incoherence within the scope of the understanding. If in one department of the understanding I arrive at the conclusion that nature is cruel, if in another department I conclude that cruelty is evil, if in yet another I conclude that nature is the work of GOD, and if in a fourth department I convince myself that GOD is good—here there is incoherence in the understanding, and there is evidently a mistake somewhere. I must either give up thinking of such things, or else wrestle with the difficulty. But I am not under the same iron law of necessity to co-ordinate my understanding, my imagination, and my emotions ; to insist on doing this, and to bring all within the scope of the understanding —that is intellectualism.

But, on the other hand, it is unsatisfying, for some minds intolerable, to acquiesce in a complete dislocation of the intellectual and religious faculties. The religious faculties are emotion and imagination raised to its highest power as faith. It may be possible to segregate these entirely from the understanding. Faraday is said

to have done so; Thomas Hill Green was more doubtfully supposed by some of his intimates to live in two such phases of thought. But it must be difficult. Almost every one has some infection of theology. Theology is the systematic study of religious experience, and is inevitably an attempt to bring the understanding to bear upon that experience. A part of the religious experience of mankind is that mode of cognition which is usually called revelation.

What is revelation? Ἀποκαλύπτειν, *revelare*, is to withdraw a veil, showing what was hidden. What is thus revealed was there from the first; it is not newly introduced, but a hindrance to the cognition of it is removed. Truth and love in a friend, already existing but unrecognized, may be revealed by a rare act of self-sacrifice. If GOD be thus revealed, it is GOD as already immanent in the world. In the canonical books of the New Testament the word ἀποκαλύπτειν, as also the kindred ἀνακαλύπτειν, seems to be used in this sense, and I can find no passage which is not, at least, patient

of such an interpretation. But the derivative ἀποκάλυψις departs from this meaning. Rarely found elsewhere in its literal or etymological sense, it appears in the sacred writings as one of those terms which hasty scholars used to describe as peculiar to "New Testament Greek." The papyrologists have taught us caution. I do not know whether anything relative has been found on any papyrus or potsherd from the sands of Egypt, but in all probability we have here a term of the *lingua franca* which found its way into literature only through the first Christian writings. It is there used, with complete familiarity, for a mystic intimation of things present but unknown, or of things to come. We have to reckon with this when we speak of revelation. By an "external revelation"—a phrase that is open to grave objection — men mean a communication from a source beyond the natural scope of human experience. Revelation implies transcendence.

But how can that which is transcendent be an object of the understanding? I do

not ask how it is to be brought within the categories of the understanding ; but how can the understanding even approach it? How can there be a theology of transcendence ? The great intellectualists of the scholastic philosophy acknowledged the pressure of this question, and did not shrink from it. They had to bring all within their categories. This they tried to effect by a rational proof of the existence of GOD. Thomas and others proved this *a posteriori* from the works of GOD ; Duns Scotus did the same, but, perceiving the limitations of this proof, added the luminous thought that by introspection of his own nature man might arrive *per eminentiam* at a more intimate knowledge of the divine nature. The more general opinion, however, was that only the bare existence of GOD could thus be demonstrated. It is impossible to ascertain of GOD *quid sit* ; it is possible to prove *quia est.** But this being proved, a revelation from GOD, so known, comes within the circle of the intellect ; He can Himself reveal *quid sit*, and other truths

* *Summa contra Gentiles*, i. 3.

transcending the direct search of man. Such truths are intelligible, though not patent to intelligence; and therefore there is an intellectual study of revealed truth—a dogmatic theology. Intellectualism is complete.

To this scheme there was an objection which did not escape the keen wits of the scholastics. It is evident that very few minds can be trained in the gymnastic of dialectical proof. Is belief, then, possible only for such? The difficulty was evaded by reference to the authority of the Church. The truth of GOD'S existence, demonstrated for dialecticians, was proposed to the simple as matter of faith, just as transcendent truths are proposed even to dialecticians. There is not much fault to be found with that. It is precisely what is now done by the hierarchy of science; for faith, in scholastic language, meant the acceptance of truth on the authority of an informant, and that is the way in which most men acquire their slight acquaintance with physics. But a new difficulty arose with the rise of a new criticism assailing the demonstration of

GOD's existence; the difficulty became insurmountable when Kant delivered his smashing attack on the three speculative proofs. We now stand amid the ruins. The *præambula fidei* have collapsed. We can be intellectualist, in this kind, only by virtue of a pure assumption.

Is any other kind of intellectualism open to us? That remains to be seen. But the insatiable demand of human nature for coherent thought will certainly continue to provoke attempts at the rationalizing of revelation. After delivering my lectures, I discovered that I had been making such an attempt. A certain theologian, whom I admire as completely as I differ from him, said in my presence that revelation is not an extension of our natural knowledge. It seems to me that revelation is nothing else.

T. A. L.

February, 1909.

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Consciousness of God

I

GOD IMMANENT IN THE WORLD

"Belief in God," says Aubrey Moore, "stands on the same level as belief in objective reality." And what is that level? What is objective? You are acquainted with the objects of sense, but do you know them except as objects of sense? The colours and forms that you see, the motions that you trace, the sounds that you hear, the odours that offend or delight, the fire from which you draw back in fear of scorching, the knife from which you flinch—have these any existence apart from your sensations? The whole world, of which you take these to be several parts, the complicated scheme of things which

you observe—is this anything more than a phantasm apparent to you ?

You may dismiss the question as delirious ; but it returns, obstinate. Philosophies, many and various, are attempted answers, more or less inadequate. You may neglect philosophy ; you may deride it as futile ; but others will yield to its seductions. The obstinate questionings of the human mind cannot be silenced. Their perpetual recurrence, and the repeated struggles of strenuous intellects with their intricacies, show them to be in truth insoluble : questions that will not be denied, and yet questions to which no final answer can be found. But then you may note a remarkable fact. Whether you study philosophy or neglect it, whether your philosophic conclusions be negative or positive, the practical result is pretty much the same. The complete sceptic or the most extravagant idealist treats a railway train in exactly the same way as the simplest of coal-heavers. They treat it as a real thing. They have, indeed, a perfectly consistent theory of their conduct, with which I am not concerned ; I am

concerned only to remark that their practice differs in no respect from that of the man who attaches the crudest value to things.

Now Belief is a practical judgement. It covers many degrees of hesitation and of certainty. It may be a doubtful assent to an opinion more or less probable ; it may be a conviction—what is called a moral certainty—no less sure than a purely intellectual knowledge. Indeed the distinction between belief and knowledge, though sound in theory, is practically unimportant, and the current use of language pays it slender regard. We act on belief precisely as we act on scientific demonstration.

But the distinction must not be forgotten. It was, no doubt, present to Aubrey Moore's mind when he wrote of "belief in objective reality." There is no proper proof of the existence of anything other than the feelings of the conscious subject ; I know my sensations, painful or other, and I know a certain synthesis or complex of them all ; I believe in the existence of a world which my sensations image ; but from that knowledge to that

belief is an immense step—say rather, a leap. I can give no clear account of the way in which I pass from the one to the other, my attempted explanations are easily refuted, it is not difficult even to invent unanswerable arguments against the validity of my belief; but the belief stands firm; to question it may be philosophy, but to abandon it or to act in contrariety to it is madness. Complete conviction is derived from a multitude of indications which defy analysis, and is then verified by experience. I act on the conviction, and it answers. When Johnson, annoyed by a man who said that Berkeley had demonstrated the non-existence of matter, replied by kicking a stone, he proved nothing but his own indestructible belief in the existence of solid stuff; but that was sufficient. A belief which you cannot help having is as good as any other kind of certainty.

Is it true that belief in GOD stands on the same level as this belief in the objective reality of the world? Is it equally indemonstrable? Is it equally imperative? I am not sure that Aubrey Moore

meant this. He meant that it is equally indemonstrable, and is produced, on the whole, in the same kind of way ; it is capable also of the same kind of verification. But I do not understand him to have meant that it is equally imperative. You cannot live as in a world of pure ideas ; whatever you think, you must at least act as in the presence of things : but it is possible to live as without GOD in the world. Whatever you may say about speculative atheism, it is certain that practical atheism exists.

If that be his meaning, I am not sure that he was quite right. Newman's conviction that from the age of fifteen he had been conscious with equal directness of two realities—himself and GOD—seems to me nearer the mark. My consciousness of my own existence may not be more certain or more imperative than my belief in the existence of a world apart from myself, but it has a different kind of certainty. I can argue about the existence of the world : I cannot argue about my own existence. Whatever you may think about his superstructure, the foundation of

Descartes stands sure : *Cogito ergo sum.* I would, indeed, drop the *ergo*, and leave the two words standing as equivalents : *Cogito : sum.* "I am" is the fundamental form of consciousness. Do not be misled, like some experimental psychologists, by the language of infancy, in which the child speaks of himself in the third person, as of external objects ; for he learns his language from others, and he was conscious before he spoke. And is there a consciousness of GOD as direct, as necessary, as this consciousness of self ? I think there is. For consciousness of myself implies consciousness of that which is not myself ; otherwise the word "self" has no meaning. This other-than-myself is not the phantasmagoria of sense, which is not properly other than myself who feel. Neither is it the objective world, in which I believe ; it is bigger, and at the same time less diffuse ; it is the totality of things from which I distinguish myself. But, again, I cannot separate myself wholly from this totality of things ; the very fact that I set this and that in contrast implies a containing unity. I am therefore conscious of an

All, embracing myself and that which is other than myself. There is One in whom I live and move and have my being.

Of course I do not say that all men are aware of this. Experience would contradict me at once. But we are familiar with a slumbering consciousness. Consciousness of self is not always active : we do not know when it becomes active in a child ; it succumbs daily to sleep ; it sinks in long periods of stupor. Moreover, even active consciousness is not always explicitly consciousness of self. In the most elementary consciousness of pain there is implicit the consciousness of myself who feel the pain ; but it becomes explicit only on reflection. The consciousness of GOD which I am supposing is of the same kind ; it is implicit in all consciousness of self, but it becomes explicit only on reflection. To Newman it became explicit when he was fifteen years old, and he said that it never afterwards faded ; when he was conscious of himself he was conscious also of GOD. There, I think, he probably exaggerated, unless he meant

only that reflection could always evoke an act of such consciousness.

Cicero's doubtful etymology of the word *religio* is interesting here. He derives it, as you will remember, *a relegendo*; and *relegere* is, properly, to reflect. Reflection alone, he would say, is sufficient to call into activity the consciousness of GOD, the All to which I am subordinate, on which I depend, to which I must submit. That submission is religion. I doubt the etymology, but the conception underlying it is interesting, because it shows what thoughts were at that time current among men deeply concerned with the problems of religion. That Cicero and his contemporaries faced those problems squarely is not, I think, to be denied. The old civic religion was in the melting-pot; new ideas were being formed; you are not to think lightly of the movement because the religious revival of which Vergil was the prophet had Horace also for its singer, and eventually settled on the lees in the cult of the emperor. There were, indeed, worse things than the worship of the Beast, but even the worst was a corruption of the

best. Our special interest in those latest developments of religion, where Hellenic, Italic, and Oriental thoughts were confused, is due to the fact that the Gospel was launched upon the world at that time, and that the world was ready. The preachers of the Gospel did not offer to the world a new GOD ; they appealed to a knowledge of GOD already existing in their hearers. This knowledge was not confined to those who had been trained in the severe monotheism of the Jewish religion. Our Lord Himself, though proclaiming the kingdom of GOD in strictly Jewish terms, found in a Roman centurion greater faith than Israel could produce. St. Paul seems to have been convinced that the ordinary Hellenic worship was addressed to demons—creatures of a spiritual kind who intervened between man and GOD, intercepting the honour exclusively due to the Creator ; but in spite of this he appealed to a consciousness of the truly divine that lay behind these aberrations. Alike in the peasants of Lycaonia and in the frequenters of the Athenian schools he found a true knowledge of GOD, overlaid

by superstitions. His reference to the "Unknown God" at Athens may have been little more than a graceful play of fancy; it may have been a deliberate twisting of the legend on the altar to the purpose of his own argument; at any rate, he used it to show his mind, his conviction that behind the many demons whom they reverenced the Athenians did acknowledge the one true GOD. "What you worship in ignorance," he said, "I declare to you." Observe how he went straight to the point. He did not explain that there is one true and only GOD, the Creator: he assumed it. "GOD, who made the world and all things therein, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands." The appeal would have no meaning unless there were in his hearers a consciousness of GOD, overlaid with superstition, smothered by speculation, but indestructible. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being:" the thought was familiar to philosophers; it lay dormant in the least cultured mind; it had found poetic expression; there leaped to his memory the words in which Aratus

had declared the universal Fatherhood of GOD : *Τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν.*

But if the speech at Athens be rhetoric, reported only on hearsay, there is plain argument in the Epistle to the Romans. That which is knowable of GOD, says St. Paul, is evident to man. Invisible things, he adds with intentional paradox, are thoroughly seen, because present to the mind of him who contemplates GOD's works ; the Godhead is thus actually perceived. Therefore the ungodly are by nature blameworthy because "though they knew GOD, they did not worship Him as GOD," but bewildered themselves with speculations and the imaginations of idolatry. He asserts this to be the cause of all the evils besetting humanity. Because men will not use the light that is naturally in them, they wander in darkness. The fault is in the will, not in unavoidable ignorance : they refuse to hold GOD in knowledge. They have a natural knowledge not only of the bare existence of GOD, but of His judgements ; their conscience bears witness to the divine law.

That is a tremendous statement; but the whole of it is required to account for the way in which the Gospel was delivered and received. The preachers of the Gospel did not announce a previously unknown GOD; to men who already believed in GOD, they expounded the way of GOD more perfectly. There is much common sense in the pregnant saying of the Epistle to the Hebrews that he who comes to GOD must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek. To come to GOD is not the same thing as to believe in GOD; and to believe in GOD is more than to believe in the bare existence of GOD, more even than to believe in the divine righteousness. To believe in GOD is to declare for a practical adhesion to Him in a personal relation; to come to GOD is to give that declaration actual effect. This belief in GOD and this effective adhesion to GOD are the fruits of the Gospel: here is the knowledge of GOD which is eternal life. But this belief and this knowledge, which you may call supernatural, are built upon a belief and know-

ledge of GOD which are natural, which are a part of our common human equipment, and which are always possible to man, latent where not avowed.

What is the idea of GOD that lurks in human consciousness, and is brought forth by reflection? According to St. Paul, we know by nature the existence and the righteousness of GOD. I shall set aside the latter for the present: I am concerned with consciousness of the existence of GOD. But what exists? What is thought of as existing? The Whole, I have said, to which I myself and all other objects are subordinate; that which is more than the universe; that in which all things consist—both I who perceive and the objects perceived. There is an appeal to the common sense of mankind, as apprehending GOD: can we interrogate that common sense to find out what it is that is apprehended?

This may be done by the comparative method. But the comparison of many overlying forms of superstition does not promise much result. On the other hand, to interrogate a mind formed by theo-

logical speculation is to run the risk of collecting sophisticated results. The interrogation of savages will not satisfy those who believe the true nature of man to be found only in civilization; the interrogation of philosophers might carry us too far from what is common. Can we find in a civilization that is tolerably free from superstition the expression of an idea that is tolerably free from theological subtleties? I think we can.

Law, and especially customary law, has been described as the systematizing of common sense. In English law we have expressed the common sense of a people neither addicted to superstition nor given to theology; and in English law I find a phrase which may help us. A certain kind of event is described as an Act of GOD. If you ask inquisitively what is an Act of GOD, you will find that it is an event which cannot be traced to human agency. If I set fire to a house, it is an act of arson; if a house be fired by lightning, it is an Act of GOD. The distinction is made for a narrow legal

purpose : properly criticized it may have a larger value.

You see that GOD is thought of as *Agent* : and this agency is set over against that of man. If you insist on the distinction, you may find yourself drawn to an intolerable dualism ; everything that happens will be attributed to one of two possible agents, and will be the work either of GOD or of a man, in either case exclusively. Something approaching such a habit of thought may actually exist. There is a crude theory of miracles which seems to imply this kind of dualism ; human agency is excluded, or is acknowledged only as exercising a purely ministerial function, because an event is to be regarded as a work of GOD ; conversely, the divine action is supposed to be excluded when human agency is in evidence. But no such hard and fast dualism is implied by the legal discrimination of an act of GOD. The purpose of the distinction is only to exclude human agency in certain cases, not to exclude divine agency in other cases. Examine it closely, and you will find that it allows, or even

requires, the supposition of GOD as universal Agent, while in some cases a man is also a co-ordinate or subordinate agent. The man who fires a house is not the originator of fire or the author of its destructive powers, but he is the agent responsible for the application of those powers in a particular case. GOD is the universal Agent: and that which cannot be traced to any co-ordinate or subordinate agent is referred to Him alone, as an Act of GOD.

But are you to look only at the particular event that is so described, and to hold it in isolation? If I tear this piece of paper, that is my act: is it in the same sense an Act of GOD when the ground is rent and Lisbon engulfed?

Consider the effect of my act. I work upon a given material, a thing which I take practically—whatever my philosophy may be—as existing independently of myself. The paper is there: I come upon it, and tear it. That is what you mean by human action: if you understand an Act of GOD in the same sense, the agent that you assume is a mere

Demiurge. The marriage of Hellenic and Oriental thought produced such a conception; but the Demiurge was not GOD, and was not even supposed to be GOD. Cruder minds may confuse him with GOD; this notion of the Great Artificer is constantly reappearing, and runs in a thin thread through all Christian thought, but always in the way of a superstition. It overlies the fundamental consciousness of GOD, which conceives Him, not as working in the world or on the world, but as the Unity in which all works consist. By sufficient reflection the Demiurge, even if the thought of such an one be retained, is distinguished from GOD. In calling an earthquake an Act of GOD, you implicitly deny the agency of a Demiurge. And conversely, if you deny the earthquake to be an Act of GOD, you must bring in some such agency. Lecturing in Finsbury Park one day last year, I described the destruction of the town of St. Pierre by the eruption of Mont Pelé as an Act of GOD; a man in the crowd objected, crying out, "It was the devil did that."

He postulated the existence of a Demiurge, presumably malignant, to whom he gave an opprobrious name.

I say, then, that a familiar term of common sense points to the human consciousness of GOD as the universal Agent: not an external agent, acting upon the world; not an internal agent, like myself, acting within the world; but the One by whom all things are done, in whom all things consist.

Now let me direct your attention to another familiar expression of this idea:—

> "Rerum Deus tenax vigor,
> Immotus in te permanens,
> Lucis diurnæ tempora
> Successibus determinans."

You have, perhaps, learnt that the function of poetry is to bring to light truths which philosophy conceals. I do not claim for these verses very high poetic rank, but I think they are poetry. I do not know whether they are justly attributed to St. Ambrose, but I think they are not unworthy of the teacher of St. Augustine. John Mason Neale,

in his translation, characteristically explicates them :—

> "O GOD, Creation's secret force,
> Thyself unmoved, all motion's source,
> Who from the morn till evening's ray
> Through all its changes guidst the day."

You will observe that in adding those three words, "all motion's source," he introduces the philosophical abstraction of the *primum movens quod a nullo movetur.* The idea may be implicit in the original, but poetry is helpful just because it does not confuse us by explicating details. I prefer the original.

What does it say? GOD, abiding in Himself, unmoved, liable to no change, eternally the same, is nevertheless the *tenax vigor* of all things known to our experience. You must give to the word *res* that familiar sense which it has in the phrase *rerum natura.* Neale's rendering, "Creation's secret force," is good in itself, but it says both more and less than the Latin. It drops the word *tenax.* And what does this mean? None of the ordinary significations of the word gives a good sense, but there is a familiar use

of the kindred word *tenere* which suggests something. The *rerum tenax vigor* is probably the inherent force which holds the world in unity. That is in effect the rendering of Dr. Hort :—

> "O Strength and Stay, upholding all Creation,
> Who ever dost Thyself unmoved abide."

It is a secret force in the sense of not being on the surface of things like wind and storm, fire or flood ; but there is no reason for calling it more secret than the force, for example, of gravity, or of molecular attraction. The force is known and named from its effects. The world is conceived as one, various and complex, yet one ; the force that holds complexity in unity, that works through the whole complex, is a necessary part of our conception of the world : consciousness of the world involves the consciousness of that force ; and that force is GOD : *Rerum Deus tenax vigor.*

This is not sophisticated language. It is the language of poetic intuition. It expresses that common sense of mankind to which the Gospel appeals.

Let me supplement this with a vivid memory of my own childhood. I was perhaps about six years old when a maid-servant of the farm-house kind essayed to instruct me concerning the omnipresence of GOD. Her methods were probably crude. Looking desperately about me for a place where GOD might possibly not be in evidence, I asked, "Is He in the pump?" Being assured, with all seriousness, that He was, I looked at the pump with new interest, and became conscious of a power raising the water from the well and discharging it through the nozzle. An interesting result was that anthropomorphism became at once impossible for me. The apocalyptic vision of GOD on the great white throne has always been balanced for me by the consciousness of GOD in the pump. Since then I have learnt to follow the action of pumping in detail, and to correlate the rising of the water with the falling of a stone or with the movements of the stars; but I do not know that I have got any closer to the truth of the matter than I was at that moment. I have only explained for

myself the fact that the power which I located in the pump acts equally and simultaneously in Arcturus.

If now I indulge in more sophisticated language, I shall possibly say that GOD is Cosmic Force. A complaint that I am reducing GOD to an impersonal force will not alarm me, because I do not know what is the nature of an impersonal force. The only force of which we really know anything is personal force. We seek a force that operates simultaneously throughout the universe. Such a force resides in ourselves. One of your delightful Cambridge men, who play at marbles with the constellations, enchanted an audience at the Pan-Anglican Congress last June by saying some such words as these: "If I move my hand thus"—he waved it through the air—"I produce an effect which extends throughout the universe, and the motion of the farthest star will, to the end of time, be different from what it would have been if I had not moved my hand." Hearing this, I moved a little book from my left knee to my right, and asked another of your Cambridge men, who sat

beside me, "What am I doing?" "You are moving the sun," he replied, and staggered my unmathematical mind by adding the words—"a measurable distance." I accept that statement with unquestioning humility. I can move the stars. I do it by moving this book —so. Now, one of the very few things that I know with absolute certainty is the fact that I choose whether I will move the book or no. We know this; and we know it with undiminished certainty when we have listened to an unanswerable argument, demonstrating its impossibility. I shall not abuse your ears with discussion of a vexed question which is no question at all. I will not even compromise so far as to say with Johnson that if all argument is against the freedom of human will, all experience is in its favour; for an argument which is in truth a *reductio ad absurdum*, whether answerable or unanswerable, proves nothing but its own futility. If I do not know that I exercise a free choice in certain matters, then I know nothing, and all reasoning is absurd. And I move

that book or not, as I choose. My will, then, moves the stars. This kind of force we know—a personal force; and we know directly none other. Elsewhere we see effects, and infer causes; here we are on firmer ground. Knowing this operation of will, we naturally suppose the supreme Cosmic Force, the *rerum tenax vigor*, to be of the same kind: a personal force of will. I should say that a great effort of sophistication is required for getting away from that supposition. Impersonal Pantheism is not the natural outcome of the consciousness of GOD as Cosmic Force; it is rather due to a decay of imagination, or to indulgence in the solvent dialectic that weakens the natural assurance of one's own personality. If I cease to believe in my own personal action, I cannot hold fast to that of GOD. Close observers find here the root of Hindu pantheism: it springs from the decadent conviction that human experience is illusion. There are tendencies that way in Christian thought, and the corrective is known: a healthy self-assertion carries with it a healthy belief in GOD.

But to this Cosmic Force, of which we are speaking, we must give a wide extension. It is not only the movements of stars that are in question; there is also the movement of spirits. I distinguish my own will from the will of GOD, my own acts from the acts of GOD. But we have seen, if you follow me, that in this latter distinction we are not setting up two mutually exclusive operations. An act of GOD is specifically distinguished by the exclusion of human agency; a human act is not distinguished by the exclusion of divine agency. The reason is evident; for a man is himself a part of the whole system of things in which GOD is the moving and sustaining force. Every act of a man is ultimately an act of GOD; the working of the human will is ultimately the working of the divine will; human consciousness is a mode of the divine consciousness. Here, again, is an overwhelming argument for the personality of GOD. Can will and consciousness be part of an unconscious and involuntary system? Can personality be a part of that which is itself impersonal?

I doubt the bare possibility of such thinking.

The argument extends to every manifestation of life. When I say that GOD breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, I am using language that is poetical—mythological, if you prefer the word—but which is certainly intelligible. If you, on the contrary, say that life springs from that which has not life—excuse me, but I must say that you are talking nonsense. We are not concerned here with the vexed question of abiogenesis. If the eager experimenters in your laboratories here can really show germs of life appearing in a test-tube of perfectly sterilized beef-tea, we will hail the discovery with delight. They will have added one more detail to our knowledge of the manifold works of GOD ; they will have shown that the *rerum tenax vigor* is even more active than we thought, that even in molecules of lifeless matter the Author of all things has implanted and can move to action potentialities of life. They will report as done before their eyes that which we have hitherto heard of only

in mystery, the breathing of GOD's breath into the dust of earth.

We are more interested in those aspects of life which we call spiritual, but I am insisting on the unity of nature. The difference between a man and a mushroom is real, and there are many real gradations of difference; but the borderlines are usually hazy, and I do not know that we need trouble ourselves inordinately about tracing them. There is a *tenax vigor* holding together all things, lifeless and living; we can trace it everywhere, but chiefly in that human consciousness and will which is the largest growth of life in our ordinary experience. An astronomer is reported to have said that he had swept the whole heavens with his telescope, and had not found GOD anywhere. Poor man! it was a sad waste of time. He need not have looked farther than the impulse which moved him to seek. But perhaps it was because he looked for GOD somewhere that he failed to find GOD anywhere: to look for GOD in the interstices of the constellations is like looking for the universe in

the *vacua* between the Empedoclean atoms. If once you say, "GOD is not here," you can find Him nowhere.

That GOD is to be found in the universe, and especially in human consciousness and will—that is the truth of the immanence of GOD. It is the truth of natural religion, to which the Gospel appeals; it is the truth which makes revelation possible, and which revealed religion assumes.

GOD is in the world, directing and sustaining the world. Is it, then, simply as *Anima Mundi* that GOD is conceived? This vast system—the stars quivering in equilibrium so delicate that I can sway them, the energy of electricity of light and of heat radiating through space, the obscure growths of life, and the subtle movements of spirit—is all this to be thought of as a living organism informed by the divine consciousness and the divine will? Such a conception is not impossible, and it may be in a sense true. On the truth that GOD is more than the world, I shall ask you to hear me another day; for the present I am content with this as representing one aspect of the Being of GOD.

There are some corollaries. We must take the world as expressing the will of GOD. What is the consequence? First in regard to miracles. It is sometimes objected that this conception of GOD, referring all events alike to the divine action, does away with the miraculous. That seems to me a sort of inverted objection. It makes miracle the standard of divine action, to which all else must be related. But miracles are essentially abnormal. You do not test the normal by the abnormal, but the other way about. Therefore you must not test your conception of GOD by the miraculous, but miracles by your conception of GOD. For your conception of GOD, whatever it be, is part of your conception of things in general, as they normally are. If, then, you think of GOD as immanent in the world, what is a miracle? I am assuming that miracles actually occur, a fact about which I have no shadow of doubt. What is it that occurs? If every event is an immediate expression of the will of GOD, a miracle does not in this respect differ from other events. How does it differ? In being

unusual. And what else is a miracle? It is an event so unusual as to cause wonder. It may be that and nothing more. On the other hand, there may be concomitants. To those who can read its meaning, it may be an extraordinary sign of GOD's intent; but only as every ordinary event is a sign to the general understanding. It may be a portent, in the true sense of the word, indicating GOD's purpose; but equally, when the sky is red or grey, there is an indication of things to come. If it be associated with some expression of human will, it is a "mighty work;" for the human will is seen to be operating, and therefore to be related to the divine will, in an exceptional manner. But miracles are not a class of events apart: they are just as natural as other events, for all alike are parts of the great system of nature which is the expression of GOD to us rational beings. They differ from other events only as belonging to a region of nature which we have not yet explored, or which we do not imagine ourselves to have explored. That is the golden saying of

S. Augustine: *Portentum non fit contra naturam sed contra quam est nota natura.* I do not see how this conception of GOD excludes the miraculous: it seems rather to make miracles intelligible.

Another corollary. I have said that we must take the world as expressing the will of GOD. And, broadly, we must for this purpose take the world as we find it. There are some awkward consequences. Throughout the greater part of the universe we find nothing that jars; the stars in their courses satisfy our most exalted sense of order. But on the surface of this planet, where we dwell, there is much to disturb our complacency. What is beyond our sight in the depths of space, we do not know; here is bewilderment enough. We may be satisfied with "wind and storm fulfilling His Word," until we reflect on some of the results. A rational theologian, who is scandalized by the heaps of grisly heads piled up at Jehu's order beside the gate of Samaria, may be advised to contemplate the bones that lie scattered under the waters of the Channel. John Stuart Mill

once vowed that he would call no Being good, who did things for which a man would be condemned as bad. There was some value in that protest, for words must be used to mean what they mean, or we had better be silent. But if we regard the works of GOD, we see "nature red in tooth and claw." What shall we infer? If two men set a main of cocks, we cry out on their cruelty. But the cocks in the jungle fight habitually to the death: who sets them on? A bear-baiting in a pit is voted a disgusting spectacle; but wolves pull down an elk in the snow and devour the palpitating flesh. Almost everything that is condemned as cruelty in men occurs habitually in the wild. It is the same with elemental forces. We think it intolerable wickedness to commit a heretic to the flames, but twelve thousand inhabitants of St. Pierre are withered by the breath of a volcano; a flooded river in China sweeps away a million human beings, while we shrink from the business of drowning a litter of kittens. What do we infer? Do we confess that GOD is

cruel ; or do we aver, to the scandalizing of Mill, that what is vile in man may be righteousness in GOD ?

There is an attempted way of escape. Men have dreamt of a malignant power interfering and marring the work of GOD ; they have imagined a Golden Age when these evils were not, a future reign of peace where they should cease. But this way has only one outlet, leading to fundamental dualism, to the acknowledgement of two co-eternal powers of light and darkness. That will not do, for we are conscious of the world as One. The malignant power supposed is, therefore, part of the world ; and what is gained by the supposition ? My friend in Finsbury Park who attributed the eruption of Mont Pelé to the devil, was only postponing his difficulty ; for whence comes this devil ? I have read a novel of the sensational occultist sort, where this same volcanic outburst was made to be the work of a band of unscrupulous wizards. Imagine anything of the kind, and you only remove the question to another field. Let us follow it.

But first there is a provisional judgement to be formed. If these things be truly natural it follows inevitably that GOD wills the existence of pain within His system. The opinion of some naturalists that suffering, as we know it, is peculiar to man, diminishes the extent of this inference, but does not overthrow it ; for it is certain that men suffer from natural causes. The harshness of nature is proverbial, and nature is GOD's working. If, then, deliberately to inflict pain is an evil thing, we are shut up to John Stuart Mill's dilemma : we cannot deny that GOD does this thing, and we may not call evil good. But there is a flaw in the application of the dilemma. We may not call that good when done by GOD which is evil when done by man ; but it is possible that we blunder in our judgement of it as evil. We must not palter with conscience. If I know that it is cruel to set a main of cocks, I must not deny my knowledge. But where is the cruelty ? Not in the splendid courage and endurance of the birds, not in their instinct of combat, not in the torn flesh, but in my

gloating over the spectacle for its own sake. You must look to the end. Mangling as painful under the hands of a surgeon is not cruelty but beneficence. Picture the King of Oudh watching a surgical operation performed on the sound for his amusement, and you have a monster of iniquity; picture the same operation performed for the saving of life or limb, and you see an office of tender pity. If you imagine nature "red in tooth and claw" for the amusement of an anthropomorphic creator, I grant you Mill's conclusion; but if you see pain diffused through GOD's own system by His own will, I advise you to look closely for a worthy purpose and to be content to wait if you are baffled. For my own part, I have sometimes thought that in this there is a very far-reaching uniformity; that the drouth of the hunted stag may have a close relation to the thirst of Calvary, as the dread of death, which seems to be peculiar to man, culminates in the sweat of Gethsemane. At any rate, I see one conclusion: we are mistaken if we attribute to GOD that kind of shrinking from the infliction of pain in

which we sometimes indulge ourselves. It is well called humanitarianism. There is nothing divine about it.

Now I will ask you to go back to that other question. If the world is marred by a malignant power, whence comes that power? The question is not merely speculative: there is such a power. We know it: it is in ourselves. We suspect it elsewhere, we know it in ourselves. We do things that we condemn as works of malice. This is not the judgement only of the enlightened Christian conscience; the Gentiles also, according to St. Paul, show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness. What is more familiar in pagan antiquity than the thought which Ovid put into the mouth of Medea? *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.* Here is the greatest of all perplexities: nature condemning nature. My existence, my power to act, is a part of GOD'S expression of Himself. Also my reason, my capacity for moral judgement, is a part of GOD'S expression of Himself. But my moral judgement condemns my own action. The issue of GOD'S will

condemns the issue of GOD's will. There is incoherence. It is bad enough to be incoherent with myself, to condemn myself regarded merely as an individual; but there is something harder still to face; there is incoherence in the whole scheme of things, in the expression of GOD.

It is useless to attempt any evasion of this perplexity. Ingenious dialectics employed to show that evil is a mere negation, that vice is but a halting in the evolution of virtue, make shipwreck on the rock of conscience. Regarded merely as a record of phenomena, such an explanation may possibly be accurate. It fails only when it becomes an attempt to explain the facts away. The facts remain. There remains the moral judgement on the thing that is done, the hatred of it, the struggle to escape, the impotent despair or the high resolve. There is a morbid state of the conscience which we call remorse: St. Paul called it the "sorrow of the world that worketh death;" there is a healthy activity which he called a godly sorrow. Is there also another morbid state: the complacency of a sophisticated conscience? I am not

thinking of the phrase in which some delight, "*Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*;" for, before you pardon, you must have condemned. Is there a conscience which does not condemn because of a persuasion that nothing is damnable? I doubt it. There are many whose arguments look that way, but I suspect that nature is too much for them.

The perplexity must be faced. I believe there is no explanation of it but that of St. Augustine, which after all is no explanation, but only a registering of irreconcilable facts. All nature is the working of GOD, but in my own nature there is an element of freedom; my power to will is the issue of GOD's will, but I can use it against GOD's will; in the act of choosing I am an expression of GOD's purpose, and yet I can choose to go against GOD's purpose. That explains nothing, but it does make the inexplicable rational. It takes the world as it is; it takes the facts of consciousness as they are, and relates them. It reduces the incoherence to manageable proportions, doing away with the besetting dream of

an eternal evil co-ordinate with eternal good. For every evil act is seen to be done by a power that is good. The will that chooses to do an evil deed is itself a wholly good thing, an issue of the will of GOD. Therefore I, who sin, retain the power to condemn my sin. And as with the origin of sin, so with its commission. Every evil deed is the misuse of a power that is good—of the splendid powers of the body, and the yet more splendid powers of the soul. The sum of it is in that sentence which St. Augustine urged against the Manichæans of his youth : *Omnem naturam, inquantum natura est, bonum esse.* He returned to it in his old age, when Pelagians had ceased from troubling, and gave it the final form : *Proinde natura diaboli, inquantum natura est, bonum est, sed perversitas eam malam facit.*

There I leave the subject for the time being : I will speak to you again later, if you will hear me, on other aspects of our knowledge of GOD.

II

GOD TRANSCENDING THE WORLD

I PUT before you at my last visit some considerations upon the knowableness of GOD. I have suggested that by interrogation of our own consciousness we arrive at a conviction, as certain as any kind of knowledge can be, that the whole frame of things in which our experience moves, the whole of what we call nature, is informed by an immanent power, which we are compelled to identify as personal will. That, I contend, is what we mean by GOD.

I will now add, before going on to further considerations, that my conclusion is independent of theories about the objective nature of the universe. It is sufficient for my purpose that the universe is an object of my own knowledge. I am not concerned to ask what is the nature

of that knowledge, or what is the relation of the object to the conscious subject. The crudest realism or the most refined idealism will equally fit into my argument. Whether you perceive things external to yourself with the directness which Sir William Hamilton clamorously asserted ; whether you yourself construct each object of perception according to the forms of pure thought ; whether you receive data through sensation, and what is the connection of those data with ultimate objects on the one hand and with yourself as subject on the other ; whether your whole field of vision is a pure projection from yourself : these questions leave me, for the time being, unaffected. Whatever your knowledge of the world may be, I say that GOD is included in that knowledge. You can obscure this fact only by a sophistication of the term *God*. The man who swept the heavens with a telescope to find GOD, and found none, was not really looking for GOD at all ; he was looking for a puppet of his imagination ; instead of opening his eyes upon the most familiar of all objects he

was seeking something new, something hitherto unseen; instead of recognizing the *tenax vigor* of all things, he was trying to find in the interstices of things known something else, something apart, something different from all other things. Now GOD is not *Some Thing*.

The imagination has an important part to play, as I shall presently be showing; but it is not such a merely imaginary GOD as this—a figment of sophisticated thought—that I propose as a necessary part of the content of consciousness. I speak of the GOD in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Let speculation run to the most extreme scepticism, let me suppose that what I conceive to be the universe has no existence apart from myself: I do not even so escape from GOD. In this mere conception of the universe is included the conception of unifying force, which I can recognize only as personal will. If I attempt to identify that will, that personality, with my own, I still do not get rid of the idea of GOD. It only comes to this, that I myself am GOD. It seems to follow that, as I am GOD and

the Author of an universe, you also are GOD and the Author of an universe, and your universe is not the same universe as mine : but, further, it seems to follow that you and your universe are a tiny fraction of my universe, and I and mine of yours. Desiring to retain some ragged remnants of sanity, I refrain from pursuing the subject. My point is that not even here do you escape from the knowledge of GOD. You only confuse yourself with GOD.

I do not pretend to have followed, with the care which they doubtless deserve, the speculations of Mr. McTaggart ; but to my slender information it appears that he seeks an escape from this quagmire by means of his fine conception of the College of Souls. It is not by each one of us for himself that the universe is constituted, but by the consentient thought of mankind. And here is no personality ; therefore here is no GOD. The inference is good that if there be no other personality than that of individuals in a system, then there is no GOD ; for when we speak of GOD we mean a personal Being. But

is there here no other personality? The word *college* is synonymous with *universitas* —however much you may distinguish them here in usage—and I am left wondering in what consists the unity of this corporation. Why do the Souls agree? What holds them together? In what do they consist? A *tenax vigor* is needed as much for an university of Souls as for an universe of Things. What unity is to be found except in personal will?

But, further, doubts have been thrown of late upon the validity of our conception of the universe. Professor William James has suggested that we may have to substitute the conception of a *pluriverse*. I ought to apologize for breathing the word —a remarkable product of American audacity — in a place where there may still be some respect for etymology; but it really is a convenient neologism, and its fantastic perversity is not incongruous to its meaning. For this meaning seems to me pure delirium. Is it indeed possible to think of many worlds interpenetrating each other in complete independence, without mutual relations?

None of these worlds can have the least knowledge of any other. And we ourselves are part of one of these worlds; how then can we know, or even surmise, the existence of any other? To have any intelligible ground for supposing the existence of such plurality, we must suppose some common relations; and the two suppositions are mutually destructive. As soon as you assume any common relation, your pluriverse becomes an universe: it is, to borrow a phrase from mediaeval politics, *universitas universitatum*. Forthwith, the thought of GOD as Unifying Force leaps into greater prominence than ever. If we can imagine a plurality of unrelated things, we can by the same effort of imagination dispense with GOD; or we may imagine gods many and lords many, and picture an Homeric theomachy; but any reason for supposing the imagined state of things to be real is self-contradictory, bringing back the universe and the One GOD.

My contention is, then, that knowledge of GOD is implicit in all knowledge: press forward, and the knowledge becomes

explicit; GOD is the ultimate object of thought. Imagination is not the same kind of activity as thought, and is not under the same necessity. You may decline to think: many men do, and thus avoid formulated knowledge of GOD. Do this, and you may then imagine a plurality of worlds without GOD, or you may even imagine a plurality of gods—which is practically the same thing. The difficulty is that you are setting your imagination in open contradiction with reason. When you become aware of this, you know what must happen. Imagination is great, but reason is greater. You cannot nurse an image which you consciously reject as false. Even in a people wholly given to idolatry there is latent a consciousness of GOD which only needs awakening. From the immanence of GOD there is no escape.

That is my contention. But now I shall direct your attention to another mode of activity which is open to the imagination, and shall ask you to consider whether in this way we arrive at fatal contradictions. Whether you imagine a

continent universe or a plurality of things, you can imagine also a Being apart, transcending the world or all worlds, the Author and Ruler of all. You can imagine this ; but of such a Being you can have no proper knowledge. Knowledge is of things within your experience. You can know your own image of such a Being, for that is part of your experience ; as an image it can be an object of thought, a matter for discussion ; but you cannot transcend the image and grapple the supposed reality. That is not within the field of knowledge. If you give to this imagined reality the name of GOD, you must acknowledge that GOD is unknowable.

Here, then, are two opposed ideas : the idea of GOD as immanent in the world, knowable and known, the ultimate object of thought ; the idea of GOD as transcendent, unknown and unknowable, an object of imagination. Now it cannot be denied that this second idea is commonly current, and is very widespread. I have insisted on the general diffusion of the idea of GOD as immanent in the

world, and on the general knowledge, at least implicit, of His eternal power and godhead. It would be irrational to take no account of the opposed idea, so potent and so widely accepted. There is this difference between the two ideas: the one seems to be a necessary possession of human consciousness, which can be thrust out of sight only by the atrophy or sophistication of thought; the other is not, I think, supposed by any one to be inevitable. That being so, if the two ideas be contradictory and mutually exclusive, we shall be obliged to retain the former, and to reject the latter as nothing more than a sophistication. We might indeed, by a further exercise of pure imagination, suppose the contradiction to exist only in our consciousness, and the necessity of an alternative choice therefore to exist only for us; we might assume a reality in which the incompatible ideas would coalesce; but that will not help us in our present task. If the two ideas, as they exist for us, are contradictory, we cannot in point of fact hold them together. Are they so contradictory?

When rigorously developed in the way of dialectic, I think they are contradictory. The fierce dispute between Mansel and Maurice was not a controversy about words; it was a clash of incompatible ideas. Mansel, acutest of logicians, developed in his Bampton Lectures the contention that GOD is transcendent, and therefore naturally unknowable; rationalistic theology was therefore nonsense. Mansel did not stop there: he maintained that GOD could be supernaturally known, and was so known by revelation. The knowledge thus imparted could be rationally developed, but only by a strict unfolding of the fixed content of revealed truth. Against this conception of theology Maurice raged. The direct and natural knowledge of GOD was for him the most precious of human possessions: GOD revealed Himself, but in every movement of the world of sense and of thought; the Word of the LORD spoken by a prophet was but the explication of that which the most untutored mind could dimly perceive. I think that Maurice insufficiently distinguished between the

knowledge of GOD which is in all men by nature and that knowledge of grace which is the Christian prerogative—the *nosse* which is *vivere*; but I have already so far shown my mind that you will understand how impossible I find it to allow a complete separation of the two. The knowledge of grace, which comes by revelation of JESUS CHRIST, requires the natural knowledge for its antecedent. Those who are to come to GOD must believe that He is: only to those who know Him can GOD speak in revelation. For Mansel, revelation was a voice from the unknown.

Mansel did not, of course, contemplate a complete dislocation of GOD and the world. GOD had revealed Himself as the Creator of the world; therefore something could be known of Him from the work of nature. But this knowledge was not properly a natural knowledge; it depended upon the supernatural knowledge of GOD as Creator, given by revelation, and was controlled by it. This was Mansel's purpose; he would subject reason to revelation, would show the

futility of criticizing the data of revealed truth, from the point of view either of logic or of ethics ; the human mind could only receive the data and loyally work from them. The facts of nature were equally data, from which the mind could work loyally and attain natural science ; but it was impossible to advance by this pathway to the knowledge of GOD. There were two distinct spheres of knowledge, natural and supernatural, linked together only by the fact that GOD had revealed Himself as the Author of Nature.

I have sketched the position only with the broadest lines, but not, I think, unfairly. Conclusions were speedily pushed far. This severe and unflinching argument, reinforced by Maurice's polemic, pointed to an inevitable halting-place. Thomas Huxley was among the first to arrive. He accepted with alacrity the assertion that GOD is past finding out. A student of causes and effects, he allowed the probable existence of a transcendent First Cause, but it was *ex hypothesi* beyond the field of knowledge. Not even its bare existence could be demonstrated. I do

not know to what extent Huxley was influenced by Kant; directly, perhaps, not at all; but the results of the *Kritik* were passing down, as in a filter, through all the thought of the nineteenth century, and the hammering of the cosmological argument for the existence of GOD was very complete. Huxley allowed the imaginative presentment of a First Cause; he had no quarrel with the conception of GOD as an object of the imagination; but there he stopped. He would not confuse knowledge and imagination. You know his famous remark—that he would like to be able to say "Thank you!" every night. He was himself a man of fine imagination, but he put a curb on this faculty, and he would not pretend to know. He called himself an agnostic. Mansel was the only begetter of the term, Huxley produced it, but Herbert Spencer gave it the vogue which it now has. It was he who made the system of agnosticism.

That system is the inevitable outcome of the idea of the transcendence of GOD dialectically developed. You are no more

bound to stop there than Mansel was, and there is more than one way of advance. His irrational leap to the acceptance of a revelation is indeed faulty; for many of us it is impossible, cutting thought in two with a dualism that is intolerable. It involves the acceptance of information from an unknown informant: from one who exists, if at all, in a mode of existence wholly different from your own, so that communication is unintelligible. Why should I believe that a message comes to me from this transcendent Being? If I suppose the message, why should I believe it to be true? What bridge is there across this impassable gulf? The notion runs counter to the obvious truth that if I am to come to GOD, or to accept anything as from Him, I must first believe that He is. There is no coherence between the notions of a naturally unknowable GOD and of a self-revealing GOD. It will not do: I am driven back upon mere agnosticism.

But there is another way of advance. It is the way of imagination. I may boldly launch forth into the unknown, trust

myself to dreams, to thoughts that rise insurgent within me. Other men dream the same dreams, see the same visions, which thus acquire a measure of probability. I take them as they come ; I act upon them as if they were true ; I note the consequences ; the hypothesis works, or it does not ; it fits in with the facts of experience or it does not ; if it does not, the dream passes away ; if it does, I have achieved some degree of verification ; the probability of that which I imagined grows in strength, until it amounts to a moral certainty that I have had a vision of the true, or at least to a conviction in which I can rest.

That, if I am not mistaken, was the process of Romanes. The process of Pascal, though starting from the standpoint rather of scepticism than of agnosticism, was not dissimilar. There seems to be no doubt that a kind of assurance is thus generated ; and certainty is certain, whatever its ground may be. Mr. Kempson has attempted to construct a formal apologetic on this basis. The chief internal weakness of his argument is due, as it

seems to me, to an inconsiderate retention of the scholastic definition of faith. He identifies faith and belief, and, with Pearson, he distinguishes belief from knowledge as the acceptance of truth on the authority of an informant. But then knowledge must go before faith : I must know GOD before I can believe GOD. Faith of this kind can have no base in agnosticism. Mr. Kempson will probably say that he proceeds by scientific method, taking the existence and revelation of GOD as a working hypothesis, to be verified in the experience of those who act on the hypothesis by believing GOD's Word. That is not the ordinary way of those who pass on from agnosticism. With them faith is itself the hypothesis, a venture into the unknown. It is a kind of sublime imagination, a dream or vision in which the soul finds rest, because it accounts for things otherwise too bewildering for endurance. That may induce the most complete assurance, but the result does not come into comparison with knowledge. GOD remains unknown and unknowable, but the soul possesses an image which it

passionately hopes to be a true portraiture of the invisible. St. Paul was in a frame of mind very different from this when he wrote: "I know Him in Whom I have believed."

GOD remains unknowable: that is the last word of the reasoned theology of transcendence. When dialectically complete, the idea of GOD's transcendence shuts out the possibility of knowing Him. And the conclusion is more than theory. It is sufficiently obvious that when this developed idea of transcendence has taken hold of a man it makes him practically incapable of recognizing GOD as immanent in the world. If I speak to a disciple of Herbert Spencer of the manifold tokens of GOD's activity in the world, he supposes me to mean that an external power is intervening in the order of nature, and he rightly answers that he can neither find room for such intervention nor know anything of such externality. To speak of an earthquake as an Act of GOD is for him the merest superstition. The dialectically complete idea of GOD's transcendence contradicts and excludes the idea of GOD's

immanence in the world. I am therefore obliged, by my previous conclusions, to consider it a sophistication of thought.

Now I must ask you to go back a little. I said a while ago that in the interrogation of human consciousness we cannot rationally ignore the idea of GOD as transcending the world. It is not as inevitable as the idea of GOD'S immanence in the world, but it is strongly entrenched in the religious thought of mankind. Is it to be cast out as incompatible with the knowledge of GOD ?

I answer that the dialectical idea is a very different thing from the idea that is generally diffused. After all, few men are dialecticians, and not many follow those who are. It may very well be that the common sense of mankind holds a truth which is pushed by philosophers into falsehood. Poets are the safest guides : *proprie communia dicere* is their vocation. The principle holds, with at least equal force, for the working of human imagination ; and a transcendent Being is an object of imagination. The common imagination of mankind may portray GOD as transcendent

in a sense that becomes false only when pushed too far by a logic that is not transcendent. I set aside for the moment all thought of a divine revelation. We are examining that natural knowledge of GOD which alone makes revelation possible, and that natural image of GOD which may legitimately transcend knowledge. The natural must for us precede the supernatural. To the common sense of mankind let there be superadded a supernatural illumination, and you have the divine law; if to the natural human imagination there supervene a touch that is beyond nature, the poet becomes a prophet.

What, then, is the unsophisticated testimony of human imagination to the transcendence of GOD? It does not reach out to the Infinite, the Absolute. It does not part company entirely from the world. Holding fast to the world of experience, and starting from the common knowledge of GOD as immanent in this world, it figures Him as at once here and reaching beyond. I know, but I know in part. GOD is in the world, sustaining and containing the world, the *Anima Mundi*;

therefore I know Him; but when I have pushed to the extreme limits of knowledge, I have not reached the limits of that which is known. Go to the book which expresses more perfectly than any other the pure spirit of the Arabian desert, the very home of transcendent worship, and what do you find? Zophar the Naamathite says reprovingly to Job:—

"Canst thou by searching find out GOD?
Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?
The heights of heaven: what canst thou do?
Deeper than the grave: what canst thou know?
The measure thereof is longer than the earth,
And broader than the sea."

Or again, Job himself is the speaker:—

"Behold I go forward, but He is not there:
And backward, but I cannot perceive Him:
On the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him:
He turneth Himself to the right hand, that I cannot see Him."

There you have the poetic description of this transcendence of GOD: it is a mysterious elusiveness. I suppose that, according to the scheme of the book, Zophar is intended to express it more crudely, and

Job with deeper insight. The search of GOD in height and depth and breadth is not altogether futile, but it has no finality. He is here, before and behind, about me on every side, but I cannot grasp Him. He transcends my thought.

The object of thought is the universe or a part of the universe ; a thing or the totality of things. This is equally true whether perception is of the crudest and most infantile description or of the most reasoned philosophic kind ; it is equally true whether perception be directly of things, or of mental images for which a background of reality is presumed. While you perceive only things, I do not suppose that by any diligent searching you can find GOD ; when you perceive, however crudely, a totality of things, I contend that GOD becomes a normally necessary object of your knowledge. This does not, of course, mean that you perceive all things diffusely, or the sum of all things in its entirety ; it means only that you perceive the existence of a totality, you look at things as integral parts of a whole. Here, then, you find

GOD, but He is more than you can grasp. Why? You can grasp the totality of things. If GOD be no more than the immanent *Anima Mundi*—the Spirit that fills all things and moves all things, in Whom all things consist—why can you not grasp Him with all things? By the pressure of this question you are pushed on to think of GOD as transcending the totality of things. You can entertain this thought because you do not regard GOD as one Thing among many. If what you call GOD is but one Thing among many, or one Force among many, you are not really thinking of GOD at all. Let me say here, with all possible reserve of reverence, that it matters nothing for the moment whether GOD be the most objective of objects or a figment of the imagination: we are concerned with what we mean when we speak of GOD. We mean not one among many, but the One that is in all and over all.

Do you observe a change in my language? I have said before that GOD is All. That is the language of immanence. I now say that GOD is over all.

That is the language of transcendence. Because you know GOD as All in all, as the *tenax vigor* containing and sustaining all things, you can from that sure ground of knowledge make the upward leap of imagination, and picture Him as over all. That is to say, you can imagine Him as transcending not only the grasp of your thought, but the actual universe which you grasp in thought.

We may call this *Cosmic transcendence*. I believe that it may be found in very elementary modes of thought. The Book of Job is far from being elementary, but with all its grand poetic development of a profound problem it does not involve any movement from an elementary standpoint. The writer has wrestled with obstinate questionings, but he stands where the ancestral nomads of the Syrian desert stood. GOD is visible, as St. Paul was bold to say, in the natural world. Not only was He to be seen in the beginning, when the morning stars sang together, but in every continuing work, down to the fall of the dew and the springing of the tender grass, He is still seen. He is seen in the chain of the

Pleiads and in the procession of the Zodiac, in the lioness hunting for her young, in the glory of the war-horse, in the hugeness of behemoth, and in the neesings of leviathan. He is seen: and yet the least part of Him is here. Therefore the man who, in the consciousness of his own integrity, has challenged the wisdom and justice of GOD now lays his hand upon his mouth; he who can grasp all these things in his thought confesses that he has been hiding counsel by words without knowlege:—

"Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not,
Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not."

GOD is in all, and He is therefore known; but He is over all, and therefore passes knowledge.

That seems to be the note struck almost everywhere in the writings of the Old Testament. GOD is known and yet unknown, near and yet remote, dwelling among His people and yet unapproachable; the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, and yet He abides in the cell of a house of stone; He is the

GOD of Israel, the Saviour, and yet He hides Himself; His way is in the sea and His path in the great waters, but His footsteps are not known. And this is not peculiar to the books of the Old Testament. In this respect at least the religion of Israel did not differ from the common religion of mankind. It stated the problem with unusual sublimity, and perhaps with unusual consistency, but it stated the common problem, grappled with the common questions knocking at the heart of man.

This cosmic transcendence can be expressed in terms of space and time. How, indeed, can we express anything without reference to those inevitable forms of human thought? Expressing it in terms of time, we say that GOD is eternal, meaning that He transcends time. What is implied? We know time only as a succession of moments. Reflection apart, it is possible to imagine a series without beginning and without end; and, if you stop there, you can vaguely think of GOD as existing in time. But as soon as you begin to reflect on this, the imagination

reels, and other faculties of the mind more definitely reject the notion of infinite series. This rejection is not one of the riper fruits of philosophy; it was rather the common sense than the metaphysical subtlety of Greece that recoiled from τὸ ἄπειρον. Consequently the succession of time is conceived as within limits, stretching from a beginning to an end; the transcendence of GOD is then imagined as a timeless existence before and after time. The existence of GOD is thus supposed in three states: before time, in time, and after time. The thought is incoherent, and yet it has a practical value. We know GOD in time; we image GOD as beyond time. I will consider in a moment the result of trying to escape from this incoherence.

To express the cosmic transcendence of GOD in terms of space is not quite so difficult. Infinite space is as untenable an image as infinite time, but the mind does not as promptly shrink from it. The reason is that while we can only think of time in successive moments, we do not as inevitably think of space in successive

measurements. Therefore you can illogically but cheerfully evade the necessity of setting bounds. When you express the transcendence of GOD in terms of space you mean only that He is not subject to any limits of locality. He is not here or there. To use words like "omnipresence" or "ubiquity" is merely to darken counsel; for to say that GOD is "everywhere" is to say that He is here and there in localities without end. I may say that GOD is *here*, in touch with me, present to my consciousness; wherever I may place myself, there I find GOD; but I am not pressed to think of Him as filling endless tracts of space. I can pass in thought to the farthest point of the visible universe, but I need not stop there, and dream of GOD as existing in a wholly different mode of being beyond space. Poetry can express for me the two truths of GOD's presence and GOD's infinity: and who should do it better than a disciple of Wordsworth? Hear Faber:—

> "Out beyond the shining
> Of the furthest star
> Thou art ever stretching
> Infinitely far."

So the imagination may soar, and then fall like a lark to its nest :—

> "Yet the hearts of children
> Hold what worlds cannot,
> And the GOD of wonders
> Loves the lowly spot."

This expression, then, is less paralysing than that of eternity ; but it is found equally incoherent when analysed. We know GOD in the world that we know under the forms of time and space. Transcend those forms, and what knowledge have we ? Here is knowledge ; there is imagination denying the forms of knowledge : how can this knowledge and that imagination cohere ? To escape this incoherence is the purpose of much speculation upon the Divine Nature. And how is the escape attempted ? By the abstraction of time and space. You invent an abstract GOD, existing wholly apart from space and time, apart from the world of our experience. That is the idol which has been called the GOD of the philosopher. What is the value of it ? Observe that your imagination has risen to these heights from the

ground of experience where you know GOD as immanent in the world. Having risen, you destroy your support: you launch upon a shoreless sea and go adrift. The end is the conception of an absolute Being, unrelated to the world; therefore unknowable to us; and worse, indifferent to us. It is the Epicurean conception of the Godhead, which was in fact the natural term of Greek speculation. Do you remember the remarkable saying of Cicero on this topic—a saying which seems to anticipate one half of Christian theology? He complains that the Epicurean *negat esse in Deo gratiam*. Consequently GOD has no care for men, and therefore religion is uprooted: who should give himself to pious reflection on such a GOD?

And yet I cannot tell you of any other way of escape from the incoherence. I am content either to let all remain incoherent, finding it natural to leave my logic behind me when I transcend it, or else frankly to abandon the effort to express the transcendence of GOD in terms of time or space. I might prefer the latter course

for myself alone, but the attempt of ages cannot be forgotten. It has filled the language of Christian devotion with an imagery which will survive at least as long as we continue to speak of the rising and setting of the sun. This language expresses truth ; you may safely use it if you avoid the danger of employing the propositions of imperfect imagery as premisses for syllogistic reasoning. Do not speak of eternity as if it were a mode of existence within the compass of your understanding. It has but one meaning for you, and that is negative: GOD, whom you know in time, is not tied by conditions of time.

But there is another aspect of the divine transcendence, which seems to me more important, and which induces less perplexity. As I have said before, GOD is not only Cosmic Force ; or rather, if we so describe the Divine Nature, we must give the term a wide extension ; it must refer to the movement of spirit. We know the human spirit and its working. That working is of GOD. I take you back to the problem of freedom and sin

with which I ended when I last addressed you. I left that problem unsolved, and alleviated only by the thought that every evil deed is done by the exercise of a natural power that is good; even the choice of evil is an act of the human will, which is a faculty of a nature that is a good thing. Here is a part of that cosmos in which we know GOD. By introspection we can find GOD. But, here also, GOD eludes our search. How? I choose to do evil, but in the very act I condemn it as evil; I therefore know my nature as a good thing, however perverted. Therefore I know GOD as good, since my nature is the expression of His will. But my acts are evil; and they also are an expression of GOD's will. Do I therefore know GOD both as good and as evil? Observe that the spiritual being that I know most intimately, myself, is mingled of good and evil; and I am part of the universe which consists in GOD. Shall I therefore infer that GOD, regarded as a spiritual Being, is mingled of good and evil? It is a natural conclusion; it is the veiled conclusion of Manichæanism,

obscured by some juggling with the sense of *spirit*. The converse conclusion, equally natural, is the pantheistic denial of the distinction between good and evil. If we reject these conclusions, what remains? An effort of imagination, a leap into the transcendent. We must start from that which is known. I know the conflict between good and evil in myself; I know something of the victory of good; I know what it is to choose the good and refuse the evil. My choice of the good is never whole and entire, but so far as it stands I recognize a certain quality of the soul, which I call holiness. My imagination leaps up to a conception of GOD as all-holy. Now observe that holiness does not mean a natural incapacity for sin. That is the condition of the lifeless. It means an active rejection, an abhorrence of sin. You may say that GOD cannot sin, if you mean this for an expression of your confidence in the consistency of GOD'S will; but if you make *non posse peccare* a property of the Divine Nature, you either deny GOD'S freedom, or else you mean that what GOD

wills is good merely because He wills it. In that case it is unmeaning to say that GOD is good: it is only to say that He wills what He wills. But we boldly say far more. GOD is holy because He wills unfalteringly what is good; and we have the faculty of recognizing what is good. By the holiness of GOD, therefore, we mean a holiness like that of which we catch glimpses in ourselves; but a transcendent holiness, an unfailing, unaltering, choice of the good.

That, I think, is the conception of GOD's transcendence which is required for a guard against the perils of immanentism. If you lay undue stress upon the immanence of GOD, you will end by fashioning a GOD after your own likeness. But what sort of guard against this peril have we here? I have said that we know GOD as immanent in the world, we imagine Him as transcending the world. Does the imagination, then, stand in guard against the perils of knowledge?

Let me say this first. The imagination is an integral faculty of the soul, as necessary and as competent as the under-

standing. The objects of the imagination are neither less real nor more real than the objects of sensation or of the understanding. In all cases alike, to determine their reality you must bring the objects to the test of experience; when verification is complete, in all cases alike you arrive at knowledge. Imagination will sometimes bring you into touch with a reality which neither the senses nor the understanding could reach. It is imagination that lays hold on truths lying below the surface of things, and makes the portraiture of a poet more true, more real, than the dry facts of the annalist. It is imagination that throws upon a canvas "the light that never was on sea or land," and thereby makes the picture a more complete presentment of reality.

Then let me say this. I have steadily adhered to the word *imagination*, because I would avoid the use of question-begging terms; but if you will substitute for it everywhere the word *faith*, the meaning will be the same. Faith is the proving of things not seen.

And now I can pass to my conclusion.

I have been speaking of that knowledge of GOD which is inherent in human consciousness. The interrogation of consciousness provokes an effort to transcend consciousness. That effort is a work of imagination. Translated into the language of practical religion, this becomes the first essay of faith; we believe in GOD as transcending our knowledge of Him; we believe that we know His power and holiness only in part. But beyond this conviction gained there is another essay of faith. We believe that GOD communicates with us out of that transcendent state of being. There is a new kind of knowledge: we pass on to revelation, and all that has gone before comes into line as antecedent to this new knowledge. It is a true antecedent; there is no abysmal chasm to be crossed. We know GOD by nature, and we continue to know the same GOD by revelation. Revelation is not the imparting of knowledge by a purely transcendent GOD. That is unmeaning. Of that which is purely transcendent we can receive no knowledge. GOD is not purely transcendent. The transcendent GOD who

reveals Himself is the GOD whom we know as immanent in the world. Because we know Him thus, we can receive His revelation. Revelation assumes the natural knowledge of GOD, and enlarges it.

But further, the objects alike of the understanding and of faith must be brought to the test of experience. So only can their reality be ascertained. Delusions are not unknown in either plane ; the verification of experience cancels delusions and secures knowledge. But can we verify the observations of a faith that transcends our natural environment ? If there were a hard and fast line, or a chasm, between that which is in the world and that which transcends the world, between the natural and the supernatural, such verification would be impossible : faith would be nothing more than unverified imagination. But the transcendent GOD is also immanent in the world, and His being is continuous. We know Him in part by nature, and that knowledge can be extended without a break beyond nature. Thinking in terms of time and space, we fail to achieve this, and fall into incoherence. Yet even there, when

we have fortified ourselves by observation elsewhere, we may appreciate what Aubrey Moore said about the difference between religion and philosophy in speaking of GOD as the Infinite—"for the one it is an adjective, for the other a substantive." There is no room in Christian thought for the absolute Infinite; we can only think of GOD as limited, because in relation to ourselves. Our word for GOD is *Immensus* —transcending all measure that we can apply, but known as such by the very fact that we do apply a measure. Therefore, in the merest cosmic sense, we accept the continuity of the immanent and the transcendent; we stride, however illogically, from time to eternity. We can do this here because we are fortified elsewhere. In the holiness of GOD is the strength of our belief in the continuity of GOD. Between the immanent holiness of GOD which we recognize in the working of our own conscience, and the transcendent holiness of GOD after which the imagination reaches without end, there is no chasm even for our understanding. The perfect holiness of GOD is revealed as in line with

that elementary holiness which we know in our own nature. It is immanent in our conscience, bearing witness against our own evil deeds; it is revealed as exceeding our measure and yet not unintelligible; indeed, it is revealed in human environment, in the life and character of JESUS CHRIST. So it is presented to us, in nature and beyond nature; and we can verify the presentment.

Verification is possible because it is presented in a dynamic sense. The holiness of GOD is a power of holiness for us. It is a power when recognized as immanent in our conscience, and it remains a power when transcending our world. We can verify this power in our own nature, at least as bearing witness against sin, but it is here a power that is checked and thrown back: "the good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not, that I do." We hear of a transcendent holiness, which is also declared to be a power for us, a power of grace. If that be so we can verify this also. We do it. We do not depend exclusively upon our individual verification. There is no such

bare individualism in the natural sciences, and there is none such in the science of the supernatural. As we lean upon the experience and the common sense of the world, so we lean upon the experience and the common sense of the Church ; we lean upon the experiments of the chemist, and we lean upon the experiments of the saint. But all experience is in the first place individual, and the most complete certainty is that of him who has himself made experiment. We push experiment to the verge of nature, halting and stumbling ; then we make the venture of faith, push out into the unknown, and achieve knowledge. We can say with St. Paul : " I know Him in Whom I have believed." But that which is known ceases to be transcendent. The boundary-line is not fixed ; it recedes before those who take the kingdom of heaven by force. Holiness hardly imagined is achieved ; more and more the choice of good becomes normal ; and yet our advance brings humility, for there is a growing imagination of a height and depth and breadth still unattained. The supernatural is ever with us, though

we conquer it step by step for the realm of our nature. We push forward, learning and knowing, ever approximating to the immensity of the whole knowledge of GOD. That knowledge, that growing knowledge, is our eternal life.

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